

LWJ **NUTRITION  
GUIDE**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
LADIES WHO LIFT

WRITTEN BY ANNA TITCOMB

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**ARE YOU READY  
TO MAKE SOME  
CHANGES?**

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LADIES  
WHO LIFT

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

- 01. Philosophy
- 02. What we will be discussing-calories, body composition, fine to change not to change, etc.
- 03. Emotion beyond nutrition-see outside help

### HI! AND WELCOME TO THE LADIES WHO LIFT NUTRITION GUIDE!

Before we dive in, let's take a moment to run over some nutrition philosophy and scope of this resource. A few underpinning foundation thoughts will shape what we are planning to discuss in the following chapters.

### I'M RAE (@RAE.WHOLIFTS)

As the owner and founder of Ladies who Lift, it is my mission and my passion to help women better understand their bodies, their health, and their relationship with both.

I believe that knowledge is power, and the more knowledge you collect, the more powerful, in charge, and in control of your body, your habits, and your LIFE you will feel.

At the beginning of my fitness journey I didn't know what was right and what was wrong. I tried everything I read on the internet, instagram, and countless blogs-but never felt like I could grasp what was real information and what was B.S.

With the Ladies who Lift nutrition guide it is our hope that we can cut through all the crap and teach you once and for all the truth of what it means to reach your goals and have a healthy, sustainable relationship with food.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



A brief introduction before we begin:

**I'M ANNA (@ANNATEE\_RD)**

I've been a registered dietitian for the past five years, specializing in weight management, disordered eating, and sports nutrition. Some fun information about me: I live with my husband and our two cats, my favorite lift is the deadlift, and I'm super into classic dad rock, Survivor, finding new bean recipes (please send your faves), and vegan cake.

This guide is intended to provide general and Factual nutrition information. It is our hope that you use this information to become a better educated, less stressed, and more in tune with yourself and your eating. We will later cover your individual situation, but if you have a medical diagnosis or a history with eating disorders, you will need to seek one on one attention from an RD outside of this LWL package.

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HEY! I'M ANNA

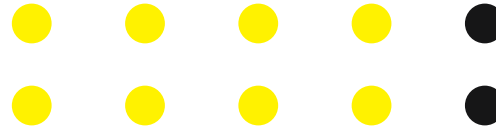


There are three main principles that will shape our discussion throughout this guide.

First and foremost - there are no good foods or bad foods. You are not a good person just because you like green smoothies, and you're not a monster if you like to eat refined sugar (most of us do!). It's well worth re-framing discussions of food around how particular foods make you feel, whether certain foods help you reach athletic or aesthetic goals, how your food selections fit with your morals and values. Your diet - and I am using the word with the definition "foods you habitually eat" - should be enjoyable, sustainable, and consistent.

The second - good nutrition is best looked at from a macro level, not a micro level. Our health is dependent on the cumulative effects of many, many decisions about food, not singular decisions like, say, having a slice of cake on your birthday or deciding to have an extra beer at a cookout. As long as 80% of your nutrition is consistent, the other 20% is not an issue. This goes for macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein, fat), as well as micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). You will not become deficient overnight in anything, and a healthy diet includes both kale and cake.

**80% CONSISTENT NUTRITION**



**20% OTHER**

The third - there is nothing inherently wrong or disordered about wanting to alter your body's appearance or capabilities, and with that said-tracking your intake is also not inherently disordered. For many women, it is truly empowering to know that our bodies will respond to manipulation of food and exercise and we are in control of setting our own goals.

What does become disordered is when the desire to change your weight becomes an obsession, and begins to negatively affect other aspects of your life. Same thing with tracking calories or food intake. These behaviors are TOOLS to help you achieve goals and are not for everyone. You absolutely do not need to change your body weight or track your intake! Different food strategies work for different people and what we talk about will not be right for everyone - and that's OKAY! If you are not comfortable with tracking calories (or just don't want to), we'll be also discussing ways to structure your eating to help you move towards performance or aesthetic goals.

With all that being said, we will be discussing macronutrients, calories, body composition, losing fat, gaining muscle, and we will be using specific numbers. If you have an active eating disorder, this guide is not for you. If this is triggering, or if you are struggling with strong negative body image, negative self talk, feeling obliged or pressured to lose weight, feeling high anxiety around food/eating, please speak with a mental health professional. I've listed a few Chicago practices below.

**CITYSCAPE COUNSELING**

[cityscapecounseling.com/contact-us](https://cityscapecounseling.com/contact-us)

**THE AWAKENING CENTER**

[awakeningcenter.net](https://awakeningcenter.net)

**CLARITY CLINIC**

[claritychi.com](https://claritychi.com)

**LIVE OAK**

[liveoakchicago.com](https://liveoakchicago.com)

Psychology Today also has a great therapist look-up function where you are able to search for providers who accept your insurance. It is always an option as well to call your insurance company and ask for a list of covered providers.  
[psychologytoday.com/us/therapists](https://psychologytoday.com/us/therapists)

# 02 MACROS

## MACROS

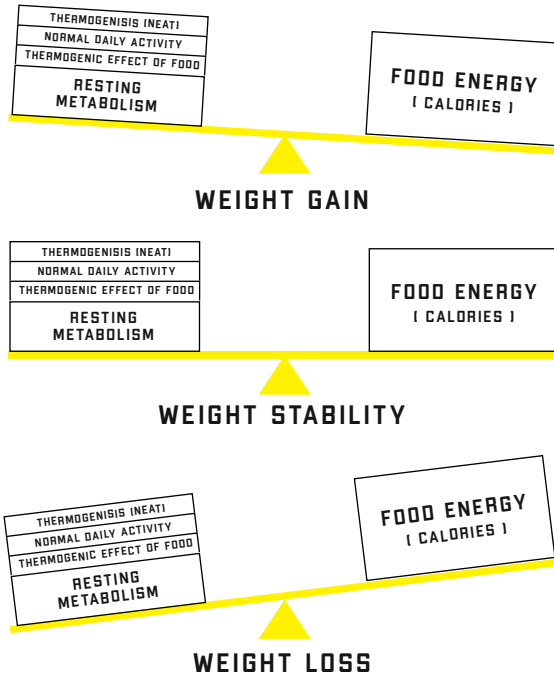
- 01. Function of a macro
- 02. Function of micros
- 03. Nutrition labels

OK, SO WHAT IS EVEN A "MACRO"?  
WHY AND HOW DOES A PERSON COUNT THEM?  
HOW CAN A FOOD BE "MACRO-FRIENDLY?"



Ok, so what is even a “macro”? Why and how does a person count them? How can a food be “macro-friendly?” There are a lot of misconceptions about the macronutrients, but the first and foremost I’ll challenge is the idea that one particular food or type of food will automatically make you gain weight.

## THIS IS FALSE



Weight change is predicated on caloric intake balanced against energy expenditure, and it is possible to gain weight eating a caloric excess of any type of food. This is often expressed as **CICO**, or calories in, calories out. Of course, weight change is more complex than this simplification, we aren’t robots. But the first law of thermodynamics still applies, which is that energy is neither created or destroyed, simply transformed. Similar to taking away the judgments applied to food, let’s also unpack the word “calorie.” A calorie is a unit of measurement, the same way a degree or inch or gram is. The calories we talk about for food are technically kilocalories, often abbreviated as “kcal,” but colloquially just called calories. One kilocalorie represents the amount of energy needed to raise one kilogram of water by one degree Celsius. Calorie is a neutral word which does not denote good or bad - it just is.

We’ll get further into the tracking/counting part later, but first let’s review what macros actually are. **Macro** refers to the macronutrients, which are carbohydrate, protein, and fat. Macro means large, so these nutrients make up all of our caloric intake and the vast majority of our diet. Almost all foods are a mixture of these three components, except for pure sweeteners (sugar, honey, agave) which are 100% carbohydrate, oils which are 100% fat, and very lean proteins (skinless chicken breast, egg whites) which are close to being almost 100% protein.

We tend to categorize foods based on whichever macronutrient they are highest, such as:

- Carbohydrate:** Bread (also contains protein, often fat)
- Protein:** Beans (also contain carbohydrate)
- Protein:** Whole eggs (also contains fat)
- Fat:** Avocado (also has carbohydrate)

There are also micronutrients, which are the vitamins and minerals we need in much smaller quantities. Macronutrients are measured in grams, while micronutrients are measured using milligrams or micrograms. Micronutrients are not significant contributors to caloric intake. We’ll go into more detail below about the micronutrients, but let’s start with the macronutrients

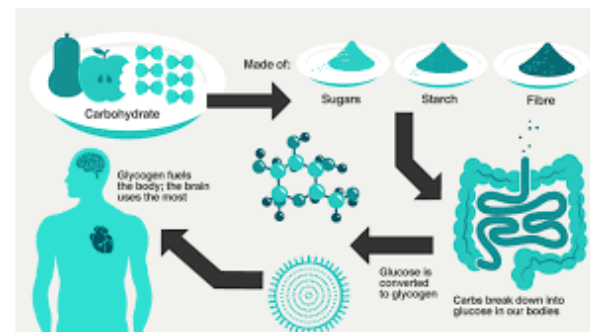
**CALORIE IS A NEUTRAL WORD WHICH DOES NOT DENOTE GOOD OR BAD - IT JUST IS.**

# CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are probably the most maligned and misunderstood foods out there. **Carbohydrates** (often abbreviated as CHO) are long chains of ring structures made up of Carbon, Hydrogen, and Oxygen. During the digestive process, all carbohydrates are broken down into glucose, our body's preferred fuel source and the only energy source for the brain. Glucose is absorbed into the bloodstream from the small intestine, where it travels into cells (with the help of insulin) to be used as substrate for ATP production (remember high school biology?).

Excess glucose is stored in our muscles and liver as **glycogen**, which is broken down in a process called glycogenolysis during times of fasting (e.g. overnight) and exercise. If glycogen stores are saturated and the body is in an energy neutral state, the energy from the carbohydrate excess will be stored in adipose tissue (the same as any surplus energy would!)

In other words, carbohydrates give you energy, for both exercise and daily living. If we don't use all of this energy, our bodies will store it as fat. Adipose tissue (aka fat) is a very efficient energy store for the body. A pound of fat tissue contains an average of 3500 calories, compared to a sad 2000 calories contained in all your body's glycogen.



The carbohydrate category is a big one, including all grains, starches, sugars, fruit, and starchy vegetables (corn, potatoes, peas). Non-starchy vegetables, dairy, and legumes have carbs too. Carbs are generally the largest percentage of our daily caloric intake (45-65% of total kcals), and as athletic people, our bodies are PRIMED to use carbohydrate effectively! Your muscles and your brain love carbs!

Outside of energy, carbs also provide fiber and micronutrients (vitamins B, E, zinc, folate, magnesium, iron), plus they taste awesome. **Fiber** is a type of carbohydrate that humans are unable to digest - we lack the necessary enzymes to break down the starch chains - so fiber passes through our digestive tract. Soluble fiber dissolves in water, thickening the post-stomach food bolus in the intestines, and is responsible for:

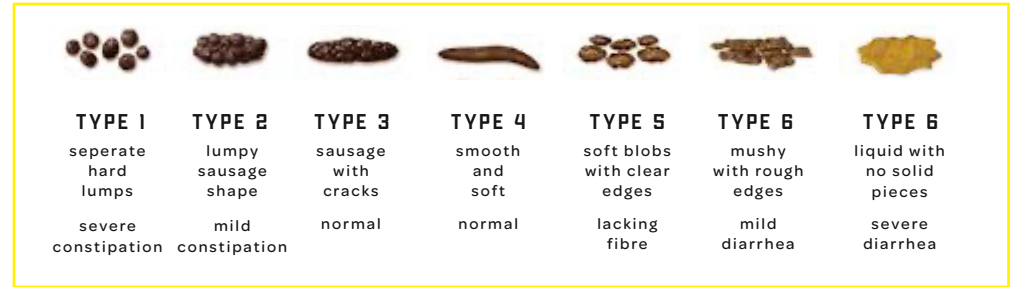
- slowing GI transit time (so food has more time to be digested, and you stay fuller for longer)
- reducing cholesterol absorption
- modulating sharp rises in blood glucose.

Soluble fiber also serves as a fermentation substrate (aka food) for your intestinal bacteria - so cool. Insoluble fiber does not dissolve and mostly works to retain water and bulk stools in the large intestine.

**TRANSLATION: BETTER & MORE REGULAR POOPS**

Fiber is also the differing variable between simple and complex carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates have low or no fiber and will be broken down more quickly into glucose. Think sugar, candy, juice, baked goods made from white flour, breakfast cereal, most snack foods. Complex carbohydrates have more fiber and will take longer to break down, again, promoting greater satiety and fullness. Think whole grain bread, potatoes, brown rice, quinoa, corn, whole fruit, farro, beans, soy, popcorn.

One type of carbohydrate is NOT better than the other - simple carbohydrates are a better choice for a pre-workout or intra-workout choice since we want faster glucose absorption. Both simple and complex carbohydrates have a place in our diets.



The daily recommendation for fiber is 25 g/day for women, however, more is absolutely fine and healthy. The only caveat - it takes time for your gut to become used to greater fiber intake. When people increase fiber suddenly (adding supplements, increasing more unprocessed plant foods), this often results in bloating, gas, and constipation. These effects are temporary! Give your gut some time to catch up and increase fiber intake gradually. Fiber can also be made more digestible by cooking (maybe give the salads a break) or blending (smoothies are a great way to ease into more fruit/vegetable consumption).

There has been so much misinformation and fear mongering about carbohydrates in the last decade, however, carbs are not the enemy and will not inherently make you gain weight. Fiber and micronutrients are only some of many benefits of continuing to eat carbs. Continuing to eat carbs in your diet also means greater taste satisfaction, increased satiety and fullness, honoring cultural food traditions, enhancing athletic performance, and (let's be real) helping your grocery budget out! Low carb diets are expensive...

DO NOT  
FEAR CARBS



# FATS


The second macronutrient is fat. Again, an occasionally maligned macro, although it has been enjoying a resurgence with the low-carb diets. Dietary fat is not the same as adipose tissue, structural fat, or subcutaneous fat, meaning the fat you eat is NOT magically transformed into your body fat. **Fat** is an essential nutrient and must be included in the diet, particularly for women, usually between 20-35% of total kcals. Very low fat diets have been linked with hormone disruptions and amenorrhea, which has significant consequences for bone health. Functions of dietary fat include providing energy, forming structural components of cell walls, boosting absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K), promoting satiety, and enhancing mouthfeel and flavor of foods.

Dietary fat can come from animals or plants and has different categories based on its molecular structure (degree of double bonds between carbons in fatty acids, for my beautiful science nerds). Saturated fatty acids are found mostly in animal fats (butter, lard), but also coconut and palm oils. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are usually found in plant sources, e.g. olive, canola, avocado, grapeseed, corn, canola oil, avocado, nuts, seeds. Unsaturated fats are also present in oily fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring) which are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are “essential,” meaning humans are unable to synthesize them. Good vegan sources are walnuts, flax, chia, hemp, and many vegans choose to supplement with algae omega-3.

We see better health outcomes linked to greater intake of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, however, saturated fat is not the devil and won't kill you. It's a good idea to diversify your fat sources!

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# PROTEINS

Ah, protein. Everyone's favorite macro and the source of much anxiety and obsession. Protein is found in meat, eggs, dairy, beans, soy, lentils, and whole grains. During the digestive process, all protein is hydrolyzed into amino acids, which are the building blocks of pretty much all structures in our body. **Amino acids** form the base for RNA/DNA, enzymes, hormones, immunoproteins, and all tissues including muscle. There are 9 "essential" amino acids, which, again, are not synthesized by humans and must be consumed. All animal proteins are "complete," meaning they contain all essential amino acids. Plant protein sources are mostly "incomplete," meaning they contain varying amounts of the essential amino acids, with the exception of soy which is a complete protein. Food combining - or the idea that every meal must have all amino acids present - is not true. As long as vegans are eating a variety of protein sources, there's no issue getting all the amino acids you need.

Adequate protein intake is typically not an issue if people are eating animal products, however, it can be an issue for individuals following vegan or plant-based diets who are not comfortable with cooking plant proteins. A great goal to aim for is 15-30 g of protein at each meal, which looks like 4 oz of chicken breast, 6 oz of tofu, 1 cup of Greek yogurt, 1 cup of cooked beans, 2-3 eggs. Protein is usually estimated using a person's body weight, at 0.6-0.9 gram of protein per body weight.



# SUPPLEMENTS

As we head into micronutrients, the topic of supplementation is bound to come up. In general, dietitians prefer a “food first” approach, in which people prioritize eating a well-balanced diet over supplementation. The supplement industry is poorly regulated and often relies on inaccurate science to promote expensive and unnecessary supplementation. For the most part, people are able to get all the vitamins and minerals necessary if they are choosing from a wide range of different fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins. There is nothing harmful about taking a multivitamin to cover your bases, but for many people, it’s not necessary.

There are literally entire university courses dedicated to discussing the role, functions, and biochemical uptake of micronutrients, so we won’t go through every one. However, a few are worth noting, especially for women, namely vitamin D, calcium, vitamin B-12, and iron. Before starting particular supplements, it is prudent to request lab work from your PCP to assess the status of vit D, B-12, and iron. No need to supplement if you don’t need to!

## VITAMIN D

Vitamin D is produced in our skin from sunlight and is crucial for calcium absorption and bone health. There are few natural food sources of vitamin D (cod liver oil, salmon, mushrooms) and most of our dietary intake comes from foods which have been fortified (cow's milk). Covering skin, wearing sunscreen, cloud cover, glass windows, and skin melanin content all impede skin synthesis of vitamin D. As a result, most of us are deficient or have low levels. Of note for vegans - the majority of vitamin D supplements are derived from lanolin (the oil in sheep's wool), but there are also vegan options (derived from yeast) which are just as effective. Taking 800-1000 IU of vit D per day is safe, however, if your blood levels are very low, your physician may prefer to prescribe you a high dose vit D to take weekly.



## VITAMIN B-12

Vitamin B-12 is a weird vitamin and found mostly in animal products. It's crucial for red blood cell formation, neurological function, and DNA synthesis, but it's only synthesized by bacteria. Animals get their vitamin B-12 from supplemented food (ruminants have the B-12 synthesizing bacteria in their gut) which is transferred into their flesh, eggs, and milk. There are some plant sources of B-12 (tempeh, seaweed, algae), but the B-12 content in these foods are unreliable. Taking a vitamin B-12 supplement is non-negotiable if you are vegan or plant-based, as long term insufficiency leads to permanent neurological damage. The daily recommended intake is 2.4 micrograms, however, many supplements contain much more. That's okay! B-12 is a water-soluble vitamin, so you'll just pee out the excess.

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## CALCIUM

Calcium is an important nutrient for bone health, cellular function, and muscle contraction. The recommended daily intake for women aged 19-50 is 1200 mg per day, which can be met with cow's milk or yogurt, fortified plant milk or yogurt, cheese, fortified orange juice, tofu made with calcium sulfate, leafy green vegetables (kale, turnip greens, napa cabbage, bok choy). If you notice you are not getting adequate calcium, an easy and cheap option for supplementation is Tums - the main ingredient is calcium carbonate and each chew provides ~200-400 mg elemental calcium.





## IRON

Iron is a crucial mineral for active women, as it is the main component of hemoglobin, a protein that transfers oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Iron deficiency can be common (especially in active women) due to factors including low dietary intake, heavy blood loss from periods, chronic heavy sweating, and exercise induced inflammation. Deficiency is diagnosed with lab work from your PCP. The daily recommended intake is 18 mg for women ages 19-50, but larger doses may be necessary if someone is deficient. An excessive amount of iron can be toxic so please do not self-diagnose and start taking a ton of supplements!

Iron has two forms depending on the source - heme (animal) and non-heme (plants). Non-heme is less bioavailable, however, there tends to be a greater iron intake in plant-based diets which accounts for the difference. Good heme sources are oysters, liver, chicken, beef, and sardines. Good non-heme sources are beans, lentils, spinach, tofu, chickpeas, and tomatoes. There are two easy ways to boost your iron intake without supplements. The first is to add a source of vitamin C (citrus juice, bell peppers, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage) to iron-rich foods (promotes iron absorption). The second is to cook with cast iron pans - there is some leaching of iron into your food! Some polyphenols in coffee and tea can inhibit the uptake of iron, so it's helpful to separate the two. Same goes if you take an iron supplement!



## PROTEIN POWDERS

Protein powder is also considered a type of supplement, in that it should complement your intake of whole food protein, not replace it. Of course, protein powder is not necessary, but it can be really helpful in meeting a daily protein goal, especially if you have a low caloric goal. There are so many options now, it can be overwhelming to find a good brand. Try samples before you commit to a large container! Most companies will sell sample packs, either online or in store (try GNC, Vitamin Shoppe, or Whole Foods).

Look for a brand which has 20-30 grams of protein per serving, with low amounts of fat and carbohydrates. Sometimes the carbs look high, but it can be fiber! Check the label. Most protein powders don't have sugar in them, but are sweetened with stevia or an artificial sweetener. Some popular brands are below, with both plant and animal options.

### BIOCHEM

Whey, egg protein  
Vegan blend  
(pea, hemp, cranberry protein)

### PESCIENCE

Whey protein  
Vegan blend  
(pea, rice protein)

### ORGAIN

Whey protein  
Vegan blend  
(pea, brown rice, chia seed protein)

### VEGA

Vegan Essentials  
(pea, hemp, quinoa protein)

### MY PROTEIN

(myprotein.com)  
Animal/ plant protein options

### VEGA

Vegan Essentials  
(pea, hemp, quinoa protein)

### TRADER JOE'S

Whey protein  
Soy protein

### TRUE NUTRITION

Custom or pre-mixed  
Animal and plant protein options

# OVER THE COUNTER SUPPLEMENTS AND INSTAGRAM SCAMS

Please do not purchase fat burners, detox teas, flat tummy teas, apple cider gummies, thermogenic compounds, or lean stacks. These are all products which promise amazing results - increase your metabolism, burn more fat, decrease your stomach, increase energy - and will not deliver on these claims. The main ingredient in the majority of fat burners is caffeine, which will probably make you super jittery (aka move around a lot more) and may suppress your appetite, potentially resulting in weight loss. That's not magic- it's just caffeine packaged and sold to you for a lot more money than coffee.

Detox products (teas, pills) usually have some sort of laxative, which will produce a bowel movement, often resulting in feeling less bloated, "lighter", "cleaned out." Again, nothing magical. Our liver and kidneys act constantly during the day to sequester and flush toxins out of our bodies, and if your liver or kidneys weren't working, you'd be in the ICU. Repeated chronic use of laxatives often leads to a "lazy bowel," meaning you can't poop without laxatives... not a fun place to be!

What's more, these products are NOT regulated by the FDA, meaning you are completely trusting manufacturers to label these products accurately. Many diet pills can be tainted with unlabeled substances (like actual medications, including antidepressants, diuretics, seizure

medications), which can have significant health effects. For athletes that compete in drug-tested federations, many supplements can be tainted with anabolic steroids or analogs, meaning they will fail a drug test and potentially be banned from competing for life.

There are zero quick fixes or cheat codes for weight loss. If any of these supplements actually worked, everyone would take them! Consistency, sustainability, and perseverance are not glamorous or easy to sell - but practicing these habits will get you far.



**MACROS & YOU**

- 01.** Calculator
- 02.** Beginner vs more advanced
- 03.** Muscle gain
- 04.** Fat loss
- 05.** Maintenance
- 06.** How to count calories (apps to use, how to use a food scale, how to track home cooked meals, importance of tracking, cooking fats, liquid kcal, etc., how to track restaurant food)

# 03 MACROS & YOU

**YOU'VE READ ABOUT MACROS. NOW HOW CAN WE  
APPLY THAT TO YOUR LIFE**

## MACROS & YOU

After learning more about calories and macronutrients, the next step is to think about how to apply this knowledge. The truth of the matter is deliberately changing your body means increasing awareness of your food intake, whether this is adding more structure to your eating, keeping a food log, or tracking kcals. I want to normalize feeling overwhelmed if you are new to all this! No one is born knowing this information. Increasing self-awareness into our eating habits and practicing new food behaviors is a lifelong learning process.

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Before we dive into the following couple of pages, heads up that this is where we are explicitly talking about calorie tracking and measuring food. If you want to skip ahead, there is a section below where we'll talk about how to structure and balance your food without using numbers and calories!

## TRACKING YOUR MACROS

If you are a beginner, just start by writing down what you eat. Don't worry about calories, portioning, meal timing - just begin by getting in the habit of recording your food and your beverages. Go old school and use paper, or a notes app in your phone works just as well. Just the act of logging can give you a lot of awareness into habitual behaviors, areas of strength, and areas of improvement. Be honest with yourself!! No one will see this, there is no judgment behind this practice. Simply becoming more aware of what is going on is the first part to change.

## TRACKING APPS

If you are feeling comfortable with tracking and feel ready to move beyond the beginner stage, the next step would be using a tracking app. **My Fitness Pal** is popular and the food database is extensive, however, not always accurate as users have the option of adding entries to the global database. **Loselt** is another option, as is **Cronometer** (my favorite). I prefer Cronometer (especially for vegans) due to the accuracy of the database (pulling data from the USDA/FDA nutrient database), ability to easily track micronutrients, and clean layout. These apps all have free and paid options for use, as well as functions for directly scanning label barcodes and entering recipes for home cooked meals. There are some great tracking tutorials on Youtube if you are more of a visual learner or feel like you need more support in the beginning!

**SIMPLY BECOMING  
MORE AWARE OF  
WHAT IS GOING ON  
IS THE FIRST  
PART TO CHANGE**

Please do not eat whatever numbers these apps give to you! My Fitness Pal is notorious for giving women 1200 kcals across the board, which is often way too low for someone who is exercising. Take app numbers with a grain of salt.





## BEGINNER TRACKERS

If you are a beginner or an advanced beginner, maybe still getting comfortable with the apps and their function, don't head directly into a caloric surplus or deficit. Take your time to get comfortable with the layout and food database. Just start by tracking your usual intake, but using measuring cups/spoons. This has the added bonus of giving you some idea what your starting caloric intake looks like. Again- be honest with yourself! This is a tool to help you and no one else has to see it ever. Your phone and the app are not judging you!

Especially for beginners, portion accuracy is the most important piece of tracking intake. Do not eyeball your portions at the beginning! It is a near universal human experience that we tend to underestimate how much food we are eating. A tablespoon of peanut butter or a ¼ cup of granola is a depressingly small amount. This is a common source of frustration for people as they begin to learn about what portions look like in reality and how calorically dense some foods can be. Practicing this knowledge of caloric density also lets you identify areas of potential error, like when MFP tells you a slice of deep dish pizza is 150 kcals and you know that is (unfortunately) not true.

1. Get comfortable with the app
2. Track your usual intake
3. Learn portion accuracy



	OATS	PEANUT BUTTER	AVOCADO
<b>VOLUME</b>	1/2 cup (57g) 214 cals	1 tbsp (43g) 253 cals	1/2 cup (100g) 167 cals
<b>VS</b>			
<b>WEIGHT</b>	1/2 cup (40g) 150 cals	1 tbsp (16g) 94 cals	1/2 cup (67g) 110 cals

# INTERMEDIATE TRACKERS

Even if you're more of an intermediate tracker and have done this before, still portion your food at the beginning for a recalibration. Weighing and measuring your food at home also gives you a leg up when it is necessary to eyeball portions (e.g. at a party, a friend's house, restaurant). It's much easier to estimate what a cup of noodles looks like if you are familiar with seeing that portion on plates and bowls at home.

Another great goal for intermediates is paying greater attention to the details. There are so many sneaky ways we take in calories, often without noticing in the slightest. Be sure to include cooking oil, liquid calories (soda, juice, cream and sugar in coffee, alcohol), all those BLTs (Bites, Licks, Tastes), condiments, nibbles off your partner's plate, grazing in front of the fridge, because all of these tiny pieces add up FAST. And unfortunately, especially if you are a small woman with low caloric needs, these forgotten calories often get in the way of weight loss goals. Conversely, if you're having trouble gaining weight, these are all great ideas to add extra calories! (Except alcohol. Please don't expect to drink a bottle of wine a night and get huge muscles)

1. Portion your food
2. Pay attention to details

### IN YOUR HEAD



"not much"

### IN REALITY



3637 calories  
(not a calorie deficit)





## MEASURING YOUR FOOD & FOOD SCALES

For practicing accuracy, it is certainly an option to use measuring cups and spoons (especially if you're a beginner!), but the most accurate way to track is using a food scale (also cuts down on the amount of dishes). Intermediates should consider moving to the use of a food scale for improved data. Advanced trackers, I'm sure you already own one!

1 SPOON



**184 CALORIES**  
10G PEANUT BUTTER  
+ 50GM BREAD

ALSO 1 SPOON



**316 CALORIES**  
30G PEANUT BUTTER  
+ 50GM BREAD



You don't need a fancy model, the \$20-30 options work just fine. As a manner of priority, weighing foods by the gram is most important for calorie dense foods, e.g. nuts, seeds, nut butter, granola, ice cream, cooking oil, spreads - there can be a big difference between 2 tbsp of peanut butter and 32 grams! Plus you get to feel more like a scientist.

How to use it - put your plate or bowl on the scale, turn on the scale, wait until the display reads "0" and measure your food away. Another trick is to put the food container on the scale, turn it on, wait until the display reads "0", and then take out however much you're planning to eat or cook. Place the container back on the scale and the resulting number will be how many grams to track. This works really well with spreads (e.g. nut butters, jams, hummus), butter, cooking oil, and salad dressing.

Youtube tutorial for advanced scale accuracy!

[youtube.com/watch?v=CbK mz53Rlto](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbK mz53Rlto)

# KNOW YOUR PORTIONS



## CALCULATING YOUR MACROS

You can get a starting idea of your Total Daily Energy Expenditure (**TDEE**, or how many calories you burn per day) by using this calculator

[CALCULATOR.NET/MACRO-CALCULATOR.HTML](https://calculator.net/macro-calculator.html)

Take this information with a grain of salt, as estimating energy expenditure is an art and a science. This number is just a starting point, a best guess, that will often need to be adjusted for you as an individual. Weight change takes time, it's a slow process, so your caloric target is not going to drastically change day to day. Rather, it's best to adjust the target intake by observing the relationship over time (like weeks) between your caloric intake and bodyweight.

Let's pick some numbers and walk through this. Say you are a 25 year old 5' 6" woman who weighs 145 lbs and you'd like to gain some muscle mass. You work out usually at a high intensity 3-4 days per week and have a sedentary job. Looks like your maintenance caloric intake is around 2,200 kcals per day, e.g. these are the amount of calories you would need to stay at 145 lbs. We are going off the assumption that a pound of tissue contains around 3500 kcal, which means to lose or gain one pound per week would require either a 500 kcal deficit or surplus. In our example here, this would be an estimated 1700 kcal or 2700 kcal per day for this woman to either lose fat or gain muscle.

Your protein goal is going to be the most important, whether you plan to lose weight, gain weight, or maintain your current weight. Why? Adequate protein intake supports :

- Repair of muscle tissue after exercise-induced muscle microtears (this is how you get stronger!)
- Promotes retention of lean body mass (your muscles) during a caloric deficit
- Provides the building blocks for hypertrophy (muscle gain!) during a caloric surplus or maintenance
- Provides greater satiety, helping you feel fuller for longer



Aim for 1.4 - 2.0 gram of protein per KILOGRAM of body weight (divide your bodyweight in lbs by 2.2 to get kilograms). In our example above, our 145 lb (66 kg) friend Emily, would aim for 95-135 grams of protein per day, ideally split up equally during the day at 20-40 g per meal.

Please note that the calculator listed might give you a number that does not reflect this equation. There is not sufficient research available to support that high of protein intake outside of very specific populations. There seems to be maybe some benefit for intakes >3.0 g/kg for very lean individuals looking to lose body fat to very low levels (like, male bodybuilding prep), but for us more casual exercisers, there doesn't seem to be support behind prioritizing very high protein intakes.

However, nothing bad is going to happen to you if you eat more protein than the 2.0 g/kg number above, and some people prefer eating higher levels of protein. There does seem to be some diminishing returns with very high protein intakes as your body can only use a certain amount of protein for structural purposes, so taking in excessive protein tends to be a waste. Proteins aren't stored for later use, like carbohydrates or fat. The calories from that extra protein is likely to result in a decrease in carbs or fat, which may affect performance or diet satisfaction, plus protein tends to be the most expensive part of a grocery budget!

We used the example of a 500 kcal deficit for fat loss above, however, this is not appropriate for everyone, especially not those that have less fat to lose or have lower nutritional needs. Setting an appropriate deficit is crucial for maintaining consistency and prioritizing FAT loss over losing your hard earned muscle mass.

There are not exact definitions for small, moderate, and large caloric deficit, but Lyle McDonald proposed the following ranges as a way to talk about how caloric deficits look different based on bodyweight

- **Small:** 10-15% deficit below maintenance
- **Medium:** 20-25% deficit below maintenance
- **Large:** >25% deficit below maintenance

After that protein goal is met, feel free to meet the rest of your caloric goals with whatever mix of carbohydrates and fat feels good to you. Very advanced trackers can skip ahead for more specific recommendations for carb/fat intake from a sports nutrition perspective. Some people like lower carb diets, others feel best when they eat more carbs. However, sharply reducing your carbohydrate intake (like a keto-style diet) will most likely result in poor athletic performance and is often unsustainable for individuals. Remember, this should be a style of eating that you can see yourself doing for the long term. If you could never imagine not eating tortillas again, don't cut tortillas out



**EXAMPLE MODEL : EMILY**

Age: 25  
 Height: 5' 6"  
 Weight : 145lbs (66kg)  
 Activity level: 3-4 days high intensity  
 Job: sedentary  
 Activity: Light-Moderate

Maintainence : 2,200 kcals  
 Gain 1lb/ week: 1700  
 Lose 1lb/ week: 2700

Protein: 90g-135g



## MACROS VERSUS CALORIES

A quick side note before we go forward; macros and calories are not the same. Let's take protein as an example. If your protein goal is 90 grams per day, the calories associated with that intake will change based on HOW you get your protein. If 20 grams of protein comes from 65 grams of skinless chicken breast, that's 112 calories (almost pure protein). If 20 grams of protein comes from 80 grams of 80% ground beef, that's 200 calories (this protein source has more fat). Again, not an issue to choose proteins that are higher in fat or carbohydrate (e.g. many vegan protein sources).

However, macronutrients and calories are related because each macronutrient has a certain amount of calories per gram. Carbohydrate and protein both hold 4 calories per gram. Fat holds 9 calories per gram. That's why manipulating the level of fat in your diet can be an easy way to add or subtract calories without drastically changing the volume of your food.

**PROTEIN = 4CAL / GRAM**

**CARBS = 4CAL / GRAM**

**FATS = 9CAL / GRAM**

**ALCOHOL = 7CAL / GRAM**

**MACROS & YOU**



**SIMPLY BECOMING  
MORE AWARE OF  
WHAT IS GOING ON  
IS THE FIRST  
PART TO CHANGE**



## ADVANCED TRACKERS

For more advanced trackers, there are some guidelines for setting carbohydrate and fat goals, as well as examples for maintenance, fat loss, and muscle gain. Please feel free to skip this next section if you are just getting started!

Carbohydrate intakes can be set using bodyweight and the intensity of activity, ranging from 3 to 12 g of carb per kilo of bodyweight (divide your bodyweight in pounds by 2.2 to get kilos). Recommendations are below! Most of us will fall into the light to moderate camp. High and very high levels are people who are exercising multiple times per day or elite-level athletes.

### LIGHT

Low intensity, skill-based exercise 3-5g/kg/day

### MODERATE

Moderate intensity, ~60 mins/day 5-7g/kg/day

### HIGH

Moderate-high intensity, 1-3 hrs/day 6-10g/kg/day

### VERY HIGH

Moderate-high intensity, >4-5 hrs.day 8-12g/kg/day

So again, using our example woman. She weighs 145 lbs or 66 kg. Her activity level is probably between light and moderate, depending on the day. So she may shoot for 5 g/kg, which is 330 grams of CHO which represents 1,320 kcals (multiply grams of CHO by 4), which is 60% of her daily caloric needs at an estimated 2,200. Now, if she's cutting, she may wish to aim for the lower 3 g/kg, which gives 198 gm CHO per day, or 792 kcal, which is 47% of her cutting calories of 1,700 per day. That's on the lower side of CHO percentages, but still reasonable.



# CALCULATION EXAMPLES

$(66 \text{ KG} \times 5 \text{ G/KG/DAY} = 330 \text{ G CHO} \times 4 \text{ KCALS/1 GM CHO} = 1,320 \text{ KCALS} / 2,200 \text{ DAILY KCALS}) \times 100 = 60\%$

$(66 \text{ KG} \times 3 \text{ G/KG/DAY} = 198 \text{ G CHO} \times 4 \text{ KCALS/1 GM CHO} = 792 \text{ KCALS} / 1,700 \text{ DAILY KCALS}) \times 100 = 47\%$

There are no hard and fast rules for fat intake in the diet. As we recall from earlier, the recommended percentage of daily kcals coming from fat is 20-35%, which would be about 40-65 grams of fat per day for our example person who is losing fat at 1700 calories per day.

### Calculation examples!

$1,700 \text{ kcals} \times 0.2 = 340 \text{ fat kcals} / 9 \text{ kcals per 1 fat gram} = 37.7 \text{ g fat}$

$1,700 \text{ kcals} \times 0.35 = 595 \text{ fat kcals} / 9 \text{ kcals per 1 fat gram} = 66 \text{ g fat}$

It is not recommended to lower fat past the 20% of total daily energy.

There is not a lot of research that shows poor athletic performance tied with lower fat intake, however, fat intake is a major variable which supports hormonal function and menstrual health in women. Low dietary fat intake is a risk factor for amenorrhea and other menstrual dysfunctions, and restricting fat for long periods of time runs the risk of developing serious health problems.

Putting it all together in an advanced manner looks like :

1. Calculating protein needs
2. Calculating a minimum fat need
  - 20% minimum, can be up to 35% if desired
  - Under 20% is okay for very temporary fat loss, however, should NOT be extended for more than 2 months. Would not recommend.
3. Using the remainder calories for carbohydrates

# SETTING MACROS (ADVANCED)

## MAINTENANCE MACROS (2,200 KCALS/DAY)

**PRO:** 115 g (-0.8 g/lb bodyweight) x 4 kcals/1 g

PRO = 460 kcals or 21% of total energy intake

**FAT:** 660 kcals (30% of total energy intake) ÷ 9 kcals/1 g FAT = 73 g fat

460 PRO kcals + 660 FAT kcals = 1,120 kcals  
2,200 - 1,120 kcals = 1,080 kcals (49% of total energy need)

**CHO:** 1,080 kcals ÷ 4 kcals/1 g CHO = 270 g  
CHO per day

**PRO:** 115 g

**FAT:** 73 g

**CHO:** 270 g

OR, you could also lower fat and increase carbs, if desired. Same amount of calories!

**PRO:** 115 g

**FAT:** 60 g (-25% total energy)

**CHO:** 300 g (55% of total energy)

## CUTTING MACROS (1,700 KCALS/DAY)

**PRO:** 145 g (1.0 g/lb bodyweight) x 4 kcals/1 g

PRO = 580 kcals or 34% of total energy intake

**FAT:** 340 kcals (20% of total energy intake) ÷ 9 kcals/1 g FAT = 38 g

580 PRO kcals + 340 FAT kcals = 920 kcals  
1,700 - 920 = 780 kcals (46% of total energy)

**CHO:** 780 kcals ÷ 4 kcals/1 g CHO = 195 g

**PRO:** 145 g

**FAT:** 38 g

**CHO:** 195 g

## BULKING MACROS (2,700 KCALS/DAY)

**PRO:** 145 g (1.0 g/lb bodyweight) x 4 kcals/1 g

PRO = 580 kcals or 21% of total energy intake

**FAT:** 675 kcals (25% of total energy intake) ÷ 9 kcals/1 g FAT = 75 g fat

580 PRO kcals + 675 FAT kcals = 1,255 kcals  
2,700 - 1,255 = 1,445 kcals (54% of total energy)

**CHO:** 1,445 kcals ÷ 4 kcals/1 g CHO = 360 g

**PRO:** 145 g

**FAT:** 75 g

**CHO:** 360 g

EXAMPLE FOR:

FEMALE, 25

5'6"

145 LBS

## WEIGHT CHANGE THROUGH ENERGY BALANCE MANIPULATION AKA CUTTING & BULKING OR FAT LOSS & MUSCLE GAIN

So you have made the decision to either lose some fat or gain some muscle. In order to meet those goals, you'll need to be in a caloric deficit or a caloric surplus, respectively. I prefer that people ease into a caloric deficit or surplus. First, if the goal is fat loss, why eat less than you need to? If you start by eating your estimated maintenance calories and you are losing weight and that was the goal- awesome, great news! Keep eating that amount. Second, large caloric deficits are often a trigger for binge eating or reactive hunger. We'll talk about that in more detail later, but smaller deficits are much more sustainable and healthy. Conversely, an excessive caloric surplus in a muscle gain phase will result in a greater percentage of fat gained than lean body mass. Sharply increasing your calorie intake also may mean uncomfortable fullness, bloating, or difficulty eating to your calorie goal.

Start by eating your estimated maintenance calories and tracking your weight. You can weigh yourself every day, every few days, or once a week. I prefer the more data points approach, but if daily weighing is not comfortable for you, try 2-3x/week. Please weigh yourself with as little variability as possible. Most people weigh first thing in the morning, after using the bathroom, and with minimal clothes. Whatever and however you choose to weigh, always do it the same way. We are looking to minimize variables to get the most accurate data. A great app for weight tracking is **Happy Scale**, as it takes the rolling average of your weight and smoothes out normal daily weight fluctuation.



DO NOT  
FEAR CARBS



## DAILY WEIGHT CHANGE

Speaking of weight fluctuations, It is imperative that you NOT make very reactive changes to your intake in response to regular weight fluctuations! There are multiple factors which go into scale weight, especially for us as women. These include salt intake, water intake, acute inflammation from exercise, poor sleep, hormonal changes over the menstrual cycle, timing of eating, bladder and/or bowel fullness. Day to day weight fluctuations are totally normal and natural, however frustrating they may be.

Remember when we talked about glycogen? Glycogen is the storage form of glucose, found in the liver and muscles. Glycogen is a bulky molecule, and requires water for proper storage in a proportion of 1:3-4 g. This means if 100 g of glycogen is stored after a carb-heavy day, an additional 300-400 g of water will also be stored, creating -1 lb increase in scale weight. Did you actually gain a pound of fat overnight? Absolutely not. It's just water weight and will come off.

A similar situation will happen after salty meals or very large meals, when your body will retain some water. Again- you did not gain four pounds of fat overnight! It's just water retention. Getting back into your normal eating habits, drinking plenty of water, and getting in some extra steps will help bring down your weight back to its normal range. This may take a few days - don't freak out!

If you eat your maintenance calories for two weeks without change, start to either subtract or add 250 calories depending if you want to lose fat or gain muscle. Begin the process again for two weeks to assess changes. If you want to maintain your weight and there is no change in your weight, congratulations, great job!

## ALCOHOL AND YOUR GOALS

We are going to get back to weight change, but before we discuss a little more about weight change, let's touch on alcohol consumption. Alcohol is a little strange in that we do not consider it to be a macronutrient, however ethanol itself is able to be used as an energy source. In addition to the alcohol itself, most alcoholic drinks also have carbohydrates present which are leftover from the fermentation process (beer, wine). Distilled liquor (vodka, whiskey, etc.) is almost pure ethanol and has minimal carbohydrates.

So, alcohol itself has calories. That alone can impede weight loss. However - let's be real and acknowledge there tends to be a . . . lessening of focus when drinking. So you may have budgeted calories for one margarita, but if one margarita leads to a pitcher and a plate of nachos, that's an issue. From a physiological perspective, alcohol is (literally) poison and the body will prioritize breaking down ethanol over digestion. This has a side effect of lowering insulin's ability to move glucose in cells, which in turns creates a situation in which the body will convert more carbohydrates into fat and oxidation of carbohydrates and fat into energy will be lowered. It's best to limit alcohol if you have particular weight goals in mind!

OH, YOU  
GAINED WEIGHT?  
OH, YOU  
GAINED WEIGHT?  
OH, YOU  
GAINED WEIGHT?

- + YOU MAY BE STRESSED
- + YOUR CARB INTAKE WAS HIGHER
- + YOU WERE DEHYDRATED YESTERDAY
- + YOU'RE CONSTIPATED
- + YOU WEIGHED AT A DIFFERENT TIME
- + YOU ATE SALTIER FOODS

Your weight will fluctuate day to day.  
Take a daily average and compare  
week to week.

# WHY IT MATTERS

So we understand what macronutrients are, what they do in our bodies, and how to pay more attention to our intake, but we've avoided the big question - WHY? Why do people take this much time and energy to focus on their food?? This is a lot of work! For most people, the work involved in tracking intake is done with the goal to either lose fat or gain muscle.

These two goals are equally meaningful, however, it is important to understand the different processes involved are at odds and it is almost impossible to do both at the same time. A novice weightlifter will most likely see some body "recomp", meaning the scale may stay the same number despite visible changes in body appearance, however, this is a slow process and unique to beginners. "Recomposition" also hinges on adequate protein intake to help support hypertrophy.

Weight loss is dependent on a caloric deficit, however, to prioritize loss of body fat over muscle tissue (no one wants to lose their gains), it is important to lose weight at a slow and sustainable rate. This is typically 0.5-1 lb per week, or 2-4 lbs per month. Slow and steady wins the race! Other important variables are

- + Adequate protein intake (probably closer to that 1.0 g/lb) to increase dietary satiety and provide adequate amino acids for tissue repair
- + Prioritizing good sleep for good recovery
- + Exercise-induced muscle stress
- + Good stress management

Continuing to lift weights during a fat loss phase tells the body to retain lean body mass. Your weightlifting routine should not decrease or change (keep striving for progressive overload) but you may wish to add in greater cardio or HIIT to increase caloric expenditure. Again- do not go overboard. More is not better, and sharply increasing cardio is typically unsustainable, increases the risk of injury or burnout, may decrease the muscle mass you have worked so hard to build, and increases the likelihood of binging due to creating an excessive caloric deficit.

Conversely, muscle gain is dependent on maintenance calories at a bare minimum in rare circumstances, much more preferably a caloric surplus. Same logic here. It is not feasible to gain ONLY muscle tissue (this is the Holy Grail of the bodybuilding world) in natural athletes. Muscle gain will come with fat gain. That is okay and expected!

To prioritize a better ratio of muscle to fat gain, the same variables apply. You'll need :

- + Adequate protein intake (again, closer to that 1.0 g per lb is better) ideally spread equally during the day
- + Prioritizing good sleep for good recovery
- + Exercise-induced muscle stress
- + Small caloric surplus resulting in 0.5-1.0 lb gain per week
- + Attention to good nutrition - do not live off pizza and cupcakes and expect to maximize muscle growth!

Taxing your muscles with progressive overload while eating a caloric surplus tells your body to build more muscle tissue!

Weight maintenance is also always an option. Please do not feel pressured or obliged to change your body weight. Losing or gaining weight should be a decision made with logic, a decision made when one is in the right mindframe, and a decision that only lasts for a finite amount of time. From a physiological and mental health standpoint, it is not possible to be perpetually losing fat or gaining muscle. If you are engaging in progressive muscle overload with your training, learning what your maintenance calories actually are and focusing on consistent nutrition, these endeavors will pay dividends in increased strength, greater energy, and better performance.

## BULKING FOODS



## CUTTING FOODS



The foods you eat should not drastically change depending on your weight goals! It is so important to still eat “fun foods” during a weight loss period, as this is usually key to sustainability and consistency. Remember, a caloric deficit is the main driver of weight loss. Will you feel great if you only eat low nutrient foods? Probably not. Will a portioned bowl of ice cream instantly make you gain weight? Absolutely not. Your portion size will change, depending on your caloric goals, but there is zero reason to only eat white rice, chicken breast, and steamed broccoli during a weight loss phase.



# AWARENESS WITHOUT TRACKING



Tracking your calories and intake can be an invaluable source of information, especially if you have struggled in the past with the frustration of “I’m doing everything and I don’t know why I’m not losing weight!” However, if you are a person who doesn’t feel comfortable tracking your intake (or you just don’t want to), try adding some greater structure into your day. For many people, this looks like eating two to three meals at regular 4-6 hour intervals, plus zero to two snacks depending on their appetite, daily schedules, or preference.

A way to think about balancing your meal is the plate method, where a plate has a starch, a protein, a produce, and an added fat. It’s simple, but truly is a highly flexible way to structure your meals, makes sense with all human cuisines, and ensures you are getting a balanced and tasty meal.

## LUNCH EXAMPLE

**Turkey sandwich with a side of fruit salad. Let’s break it down.**

**STARCH (CARB)**- two slices of bread, a pita bread, wrap, etc.

**PROTEIN**- turkey deli meat, cheese if desired

**ADDED FAT** - mayo, avocado, hummus, guac

**PRODUCE**- fruit salad on the side, plus lettuce, tomato, sprouts, cucumber, etc. on sandwich

In this manner of eating (which you can certainly also do if you’re tracking), portion sizes are generally estimated as below.

**CARBS:** around 1 cup cooked or 2-3 slices

**PROTEIN:** 3-6 oz of protein foods, 1 cup of beans or lentils, 2-3 eggs, 1 cup of dairy

**PRODUCE:** 1-2 cups of raw or roasted vegetables, 1 piece of fruit, 1-2 cups of cut fruit or berries

**ADDED FAT:** 1 tsp - 1 tbsp for cooking fat, 1-2 tbsp salad dressing, ¼ c. guacamole or hummus, 2-4 tbsp of nuts or seeds, 1-2 tbsp nut butter, 1 tsp - 1 tbsp butter, 2 tbsp cream cheese

**YOU CAN ALSO USE YOUR HANDS TO ESTIMATE PORTION SIZES!**



**FIST**  
One cup



**THUMB**  
One ounce of meat or cheese



**PALM**  
Three ounces of meat



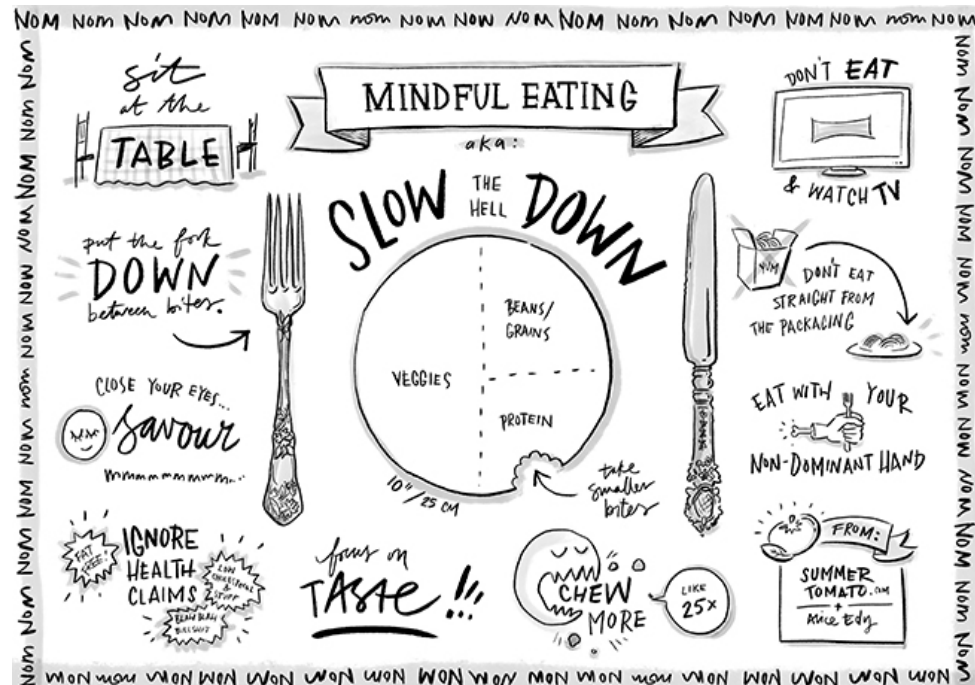
**FINGERTIP**  
One teaspoon



**THUMB TIP**  
One tablespoon

Practicing a more intuitive approach to your eating can be a fantastic way to get in touch with your true hunger and fullness cues. Many people begin by simply noticing the ways different foods make them feel, both in their workouts and everyday life. Did that salad leave you feeling satisfied? Empty? Still wanting more? Energetic? Maybe you try eating more carbs at breakfast and you have more energy and focus in the morning, great! Maybe you realize that eating a big lunch at the office leaves you sleepy and tired in the afternoon, so you decide to try a smaller lunch with a midafternoon snack instead.

Another strategy for tuning in more to your hunger and fullness cues is eating without distraction. Make your plate, sit down, and just eat. No screens, no phone, no books. Take time to enjoy your meal. A valuable place of work for many people is also noticing the interplay between food and mood, especially around emotional or stress eating. It's normal to use food as a coping mechanism sometimes, but it shouldn't be your only go to stress relief. Sometimes we may want to eat a pint of ice cream after dinner, but in reality, we'd be better served by doing a meditation, journaling a bit, and then going to bed. Other times that craving may be a true taste desire so go for it! It's important to increase self-awareness around our habitual food behaviors and ask those "why" questions.



**FAD DIETS**

- 01.** Food myths and dietary fads
- 02.** All lead to caloric deficit
- 03.** Some make hard and fast rules  
which leads to restrictive eating

# 04 FAD DIETS

LET'S JUMP BACK TO THE BEGINNING  
FOR A MINUTE

We'll recall that we talked about there not being good or bad foods, and that no one specific food causes weight gain or loss. But how do we account for the multiple fad diets out there? Or your coworker who lost 50 lbs on keto and won't stop talking about it? Or that influencer who swears sugar is \*literally\* poison?

I was interested to learn there is no one definition for "fad diet", however, there are some generalities. Fad diets tend to be bound to specific cultural, temporal, and social contexts - think Atkins in the 2000s - and purport to be the cure to all your problems, the key to fast and easy weight loss, the "one true way" of eating. The majority of fad diets heavily restrict certain foods or food groups, often using pseudoscientific evidence to support claims. It is worth noting that fad diets are NOT inherently weight loss diets and people absolutely can and do still overeat while following restrictive diets.

**THERE IS NO ONE  
DEFINITION FOR  
"FAD DIET".**

FAD DIETS

People when it comes to:  
Science-based Fitness/nutrition      Fad diets and Detox plans



Examples are keto, Whole30, carnivore, Atkins, fruitarianism, alkaline diet - I could go on. Many of these diets have some positives to them, such as:

- Limited time frames (Whole 30 is only meant to be for 30 days)
- Encouraging people to increase self-awareness into routine food habits
- Encouraging people to observe how different foods make them feel
- Encouraging greater thought to meal planning, food prep behaviors
- Increased produce! Lots of fiber, antioxidants, more colorful plates

(Except for the carnivore diet, which states all plants are poisonous, FYI \*emoji eye roll\*)

Unfortunately, the drawbacks of fad diets are numerous, including promotion of unsubstantiated nutrition beliefs, fear mongering about certain nutrients, poor athletic performance, increased risk of micronutrient deficiency, potential to exacerbate disordered eating, and increased likelihood of "yo-yo" weight trends.

WHOLE30

A diet like Whole30, which eliminates grains, gluten, alcohol, sugar, artificial sweeteners, legumes, dairy, carrageenan, MSG, is extremely restrictive and has very rigid boundaries around foods. Whole30 sometimes slides under the radar as it is often promoted not for weight loss (you are not supposed to weigh yourself during the 30 days), but as a way to identify trigger foods which cause negative reactions.

Elimination diets are meant to be very specific and should be created especially for you with the help of a physician and an RD. The majority of the population has no issue digesting gluten or legumes, so to eliminate these foods unnecessarily only creates fear and anxiety about reintroducing these "trigger" foods back into the diet. In addition, the Whole30 creators have no scientific background in nutrition, and new findings from paleoanthropology show humans eating grains and starchy vegetables long before the advent of plant domestication.



# KETO

Let's take a quick side jaunt to single out keto, as this is the alternative diet I get asked about most frequently. "**Keto**" is short for the ketogenic diet, which is an extremely high fat, moderate protein, very low carbohydrate diet (like less than 20 grams of carbs per day). Remember that our bodies prefer to run on glucose, which is the building block of carbohydrates. If carbs are completely removed from the diet, your liver will produce ketone bodies from fat to provide energy to the body and the brain. This is a normal metabolic state for humans, especially in times of limited food access or fasting, however, it is unclear the long term effects of remaining in ketosis. Ketosis is a metabolic adaptation, and the body will immediately switch back to using carbohydrates as the main energy source when carbs are reintroduced into the diet. We do not have good long-term evidence for ketogenic diets and it is unclear if there are ramifications for people who spend extended periods of time in ketosis.

20 grams of carbohydrates is a miniscule amount and this restriction usually leads people to even limit certain non-starchy vegetables (carrots, beets) over fears of "excessive" carbohydrate intake. Ketogenic diets also tend to be very high in animal fats (which often causes increases in cholesterol) and low in fiber due to restriction of whole grains, legumes, and fruit. What's more, because ketosis is a metabolic adaptation, there is no room for deviation. Either you are in ketosis or not, and an increase in carbs will kick you out of ketosis. There is no way to incorporate pizza, cookies, chips, cake, etc. - it is very much a strict diet.

Fun fact - a true ketogenic diet is therapeutically used for pediatric epilepsy patients who do not respond well to medications. It's one of the last resorts in epilepsy treatment, as it is such a restrictive and difficult diet to follow, particularly for a kid. Keto may have benefits for other neurological diseases (Alzheimers, dementia) but research is still preliminary.

People who follow a ketogenic diet will lose weight quickly, particularly when they start the diet. However, if you remember about carbohydrates, glucose is stored as glycogen in our muscles, along with water. If the body isn't receiving dietary carbohydrates, it will start breaking down glycogen into glucose to keep our blood sugar stable. Once the glycogen runs out, it will start producing ketone bodies. When glycogen is used up, the stored water is excreted, resulting in sharp decrease in body weight due to decrease in water retention. Once this person starts eating carbs again (and most people do!), they will see a sharp INCREASE in scale weight resulting from glycogen repletion and water retention. Unfortunately this change often reinforces the thought that carbs make you gain weight!

## HOW NAMED DIETS WORK FOR WEIGHT LOSS

### LOW CARB

Eat fewer carbs and more foods rich in protein and fats

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

### KETOGENIC

Eat almost no carbs some protein and mostly fats

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

### LOW FAT

Avoid foods high in fats and eat mostly protein and carbs

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

### INTERMITTENT FASTING

Restrict your eating period to only a few hours in the day

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

### WEIGHT WATCHERS

Point based system to help with portion control.

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

### PALEO

Eating only minimally-processed "paleolithic" foods

HOW IT WORKS: By creating a caloric deficit

# INTERMITTENT FASTING

Speaking of time-restricted eating, intermittent fasting deserves a brief discussion as it has gained in popularity over the past few years. IF isn't really a true "diet" in the sense of changing the food you eat- you limit the times in which you do eat. IF is often touted for weight loss, but again, that's due to a caloric deficit that is created through eliminating meals. IF comes in many flavors, but the most usual protocol is 16:8, or 8 hours of an eating "window" followed by 16 hours of fasting (no caloric intake). Most people skip breakfast and eat between the hours of 12 pm - 8 pm. IF is a really particular preference - some people love getting to eat larger meals within a shorter time frame, others prefer to eat more regularly or feel better with multiple meals during the day.

# VEGAN

Another common question is whether someone should adopt a vegan diet for weight loss, and it's helpful to first talk about some linguistic distinctions. Veganism is an ethical or moral stance against the exploitation of animals, and individual health is typically not the main motivating factor. Ethical vegans extend that principle of non-harm outside of food to other aspects of their life (clothing, cosmetics, entertainment) and do not knowingly consume any animal products. Similarly to keeping kosher or eating halal, veganism is a way of aligning a belief system with food choices. Veganism is not a weight loss diet and is not inherently restrictive- vegans still eat processed food, sugar, added oils, carbs, protein, and fat! There are vegans of all shapes and sizes and vegans in varying states of health, just like omnivore eaters.

If someone chooses to eliminate or minimize animal products in their diet for health or environmental reasons, this is a plant-based diet.

People who follow a plant-based diet typically do not limit animal products from other areas of their life, e.g. continue to purchase leather or silk products, don't seek out cruelty-free cosmetics, and are often comfortable with eating small amounts of animal products on special occasions or in social settings.

Plant-based diets can be restrictive or "faddish", if people remove added oils or added sugar without medical necessity. Certainly a whole foods plant-based diet has some great health benefits, however, added oils, processed foods, and sugar still have a place in an overall healthy diet. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health, and if following an overly restrictive and unsustainable diet makes you anxious, worried, or paranoid about food, it's not worth the potential health benefits!

Demonizing a particular food or type of food often results in GREATER loss of control around that food, which typically results in binging, which then reinforces the narrative of "bad" foods! Truly allowing yourself to have a wide variety of foods also lets you notice what foods work for you and which foods do not.

As mentioned before, consistency is key in your exercise and diet habits! Good nutrition is not a quick fix, glamorous, or exciting. It's a style of eating that focuses on whole foods while maintaining flexibility and acceptability of ALL foods, in a way you feel is sustainable for you long term.

**DEMONIZING A PARTICULAR  
FOOD OR TYPE OF FOOD  
OFTEN RESULTS IN  
GREATER LOSS OF CONTROL**

**FAD DIETS**

- 01.** Food myths and dietary fads
- 02.** All lead to caloric deficit
- 03.** Some make hard and fast rules  
which leads to restrictive eating

# 05 RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

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"RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD,"  
SUCH A LOADED PHRASE!





“Relationship with food,” such a loaded phrase! It’s become more common lately to promote a more “food as fuel” stance towards eating choices, however, this is unrealistic to practice 100% of the time. We are not robots and food will always be tied into our cultures, emotions, and memories. Improving your relationship with food will mean the willingness to change existing attitudes and behaviors over time, by practicing food flexibility, taking a relaxed attitude towards your nutrition, and challenging inaccurate beliefs about food and nutrition

For most people, discussing their relationship with food will involve moral judgments about foods, a whole list of “shoulds”, bingeing and overeating, as well as compensatory behaviors (skipping meals, cutting back significantly on calories, increasing exercise to make up for overeating). We are moving towards approaching food in a more neutral way, in a more mindful way, in that you can acknowledge these judgments, but still incorporate balance and moderation into your diet.

Even if it may seem at odds, it is still possible to practice food flexibility and neutral stance towards food even when tracking or logging your intake. If you are working with a particular caloric budget, it’s just that - a budget. You are able to spend those calories how you please. Just as with weight maintenance, the priority should be nutrient-dense whole foods, but there is zero reason to not challenge those “good/bad” food thoughts and still practice an all foods fit approach during a weight loss or gain phase. This just might look like eating two cookies instead of three or four, and that’s ok. Eating less snack or junk food doesn’t have any moral bearing on you as a human being! It just is different based on your current goals.



Before going forward, I want to acknowledge this is a delicate subject to talk about, and I want to stress that emotional eating is a normal and natural part of being a human being. There is nothing pathological or abnormal about the occasional use of food for comfort, and we ALL overeat occasionally! Think of a stressful day at work, holiday celebrations, birthdays, having a great multiple course dinner at a restaurant, wanting to try new foods on vacation - this is all part of normal life.

However, the key word here is “occasionally.” Using food as a coping skill can certainly become an issue if the behavior feels out of control, becomes more regular, or causes great distress in your daily life. Food should not be the only source of pleasure in your life, or the only way to deal with strong emotion. Overeating and bingeing are often used interchangeably, however, bingeing can be distinguished by:

- + Feeling a loss of control
- + Strong feelings of guilt, shame, depression, or disgust after eating
- + Eating by yourself out of shame or embarrassment associated with quantity or type of food eaten
- + Eating to the point of strong discomfort

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## EMOTIONAL HUNGER

Starts suddenly

Felt mostly in your head or on the surface of your thoughts

A sharp craving that tends to be incessant

You become fixated on a specific food, taste or texture

## PHYSICAL HUNGER

Starts gradually

Physically felt within your stomach

A growing pang that tends to come in waves

You are open to many options, including less palatable foods

# SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT OVEREATING

## AM I EATING ENOUGH CALORIES IN GENERAL? IF I AM BINGING IN THE AFTERNOON OR EVENING, AM I EATING ENOUGH CALORIES EARLIER IN THE DAY? AM I INCLUDING ENOUGH PROTEIN WITH MY MEALS?

Unintentionally undereating or attempting too aggressive of a caloric surplus sets you up for reactionary overeating, which often feels very uncontrollable. Of course, if you are losing weight, you will be in a caloric deficit. However, there is a real urge for many to speed up the weight loss process by lowering calories further and further, often when raising exercise, which creates a larger discrepancy between intake and output. There are not exact definitions for small, moderate, and large caloric deficit, but Lyle McDonald proposed the following ranges as a way to talk about how caloric deficits look different based on bodyweight

**SMALL**  
10-15% deficit below maintenance

**MEDIUM**  
20-25% deficit below maintenance

**LARGE**  
25% deficit below maintenance

A daily 500 kcal deficit per day is pretty standard to talk about, but if your maintenance kcals are 1700 and you're attempting to eat 1200 kcals/day, that's 30% below maintenance! That would be really tough to maintain for more than a few days. You may be better off taking a slower time to lose fat with a much smaller deficit than running the risk of bingeing and overeating.

Furthermore, if you are white-knuckling it through the week on 1200 kcals, but then saying screw it and eating 3000 kcals on the weekends, that's a weekly average of 1700 kcals per day. If 1700 kcals is your target for weight loss, it will be absolutely more pleasant to stick to that as a daily goal, rather than alternating between gritting your teeth through super low intakes and the subsequent guilt (and discomfort!) of uncontrolled eating.

On a similar note, binge urges can be decreased in the evening by simply redistributing calories (and protein) more evenly in the earlier parts of the day. Many people skip breakfast, "eat light" for lunch, and then are completely ravenous by 5p, with the added physiological stress of being

done for the day. No one makes a good food choice when they are physically hungry, tired, stressed, and ready to relax! As we discussed before, intermittent fasting can be a great strategy for some, for others, it will trigger bingeing. Proceed with caution!

Protein and fiber are two other crucial factors in promoting satiety and fullness. Satiety is the feeling of satisfaction, like you feel comfortable about ending the meal, while fullness is the physical sensation of adequate food volume in your stomach. Protein greatly contributes to satiety by needing the most amount of energy to break down and may increase leptin, a hormone which decreases hunger. Aim for 20-30 grams of protein per meal. Fiber contributes to the feeling of fullness by physically taking up space in our stomachs and GI tracts, add those fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains to your meals.



**AM I FOLLOWING STRICT FOOD RULES, LIKE NO ADDED SUGARS, NO PROCESSED FOODS, NO ADDED FAT?**

Many of these arbitrary strict food rules set you up for binging, due to that black and white mindset towards food. Strict food rules can often be very soothing for people (it's much easier to make the decision in the moment whether or not you want cake when the rule is NO SUGAR), however, this fosters an all-in approach. When you do break these food rules (and you probably will, you are a human being and that's normal), then all is lost, right? If you broke the rule a little bit, might as well break it a lot, right? And the narrative often goes "I'll get back on track tomorrow." And the binge begins.

Added sugars, processed foods, added fats and oils ALL have a place in our diet. Should they be the focal points? No. But practicing food flexibility and acceptance of all foods often makes these foods LESS APPEALING. Counterintuitive, but true. When foods are legalized, when the focus becomes not "I can't have that" but "I'm not sure I feel like ice cream right now" or "I definitely could fit ice cream into my macros today, but I think I'd rather have a big sandwich for dinner," the power of these "bad foods" is greatly diminished. You are an adult with a credit card. All foods are within your reach. You are in control of what you would like to eat, and all foods can fit into any diet.

If there are particular foods you really struggle with, that feel like particular triggers to overeating, it's okay to place some boundaries and practice incorporating those foods in a way that feels manageable to you.. Some people don't feel comfortable with having ice cream in the freezer, but would feel comfortable meeting up with a friend to have an ice cream cone. Some people don't feel comfortable with having an entire jar of peanut butter, but would feel comfortable having individual serving size packets. Some people just keep trigger foods out of sight on a high shelf so it's not the first thing you see when opening the pantry. The point is not to continue avoiding a food that causes you distress, but practicing how to integrate this food into your life with lower distress.

What's more, a huge piece of success with weight change goals is sustainability and consistency. By working fun foods into your goals, it makes it more likely that you'll reach those goals because you are able to keep up these behaviors for longer. Again, if you eat only lean protein and vegetables on the weekdays, and go hard in Pop-tarts on the weekends, you've negated all the misery and stress you've experienced during the week and added more mental stress to boot. All foods fit!

**MACROS**

**RIGID DIET**

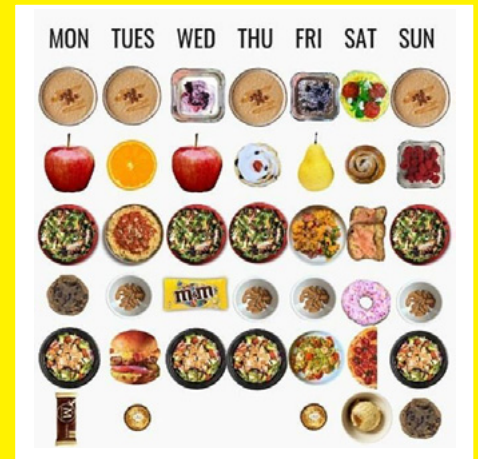


overall calorie deficit adherence: ←

YES	YES	YES	YES	JUST	NO	FUCH NO
misery	misery	misery	misery	craving	guilt	guilt

\*harder to sustain adherence to calorie deficit

**FLEXIBLE DIET**



overall calorie deficit adherence: ←

YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	JUST	FUCH YA
happy	happy	happy	happy	happy	happy	guilt

\*easier to sustain adherence to calorie deficit

**IS THERE AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF STRESS OR CHANGE IN MY LIFE?**

If so, you may consider trying alternate coping skills than eating. Maybe that's calling a friend, taking a bath, watching a good show, doing meditation (the Calm app is great and discounted now), coloring, playing with your cat, doing some knitting, slowing down. Maybe that's removing yourself from the kitchen or not keeping trigger foods at home. Maybe that's getting hooked up with a therapist. Maybe that's removing pressure to stick to a fat loss or muscle gain plan and just eat at maintenance for the time being. There are no timelines but your own.

**AM I PRACTICING AN "ALL OR NOTHING" APPROACH WITH MY NUTRITION? AM I LOOKING AT MY DIET WITH A BLACK AND WHITE LENS?**

I mentioned this concept above in #2, however, it also applies to your diet as well. If your weight loss goal is 1700 kcals, and you eat a couple extra cookies which pushes you to 1850 kcals - don't panic! All is not ruined. Again, this scenario has the possibility to trigger a binge by perpetuating the mindset of all or nothing, if you messed up a little, might as well mess up a lot. Chill for a minute and accept the day didn't go as planned. Take what you can from the situation to learn from it (were you stressed? Did you forget how good those cookies were and realistically

should have budgeted more calories for them? Did your roommate offer them to you and you felt rude refusing?) and see if you can do something different the next time that situation presents itself.

Similarly, please do not try to make up for binging or overeating. In the above example - don't take off 150 kcals the next day. Just go forward. Do not skip breakfast the next morning after an evening binge, even if you're not that hungry. Just get right back on track. Skipping meals or other compensation measures (doing an extra workout, cutting back on calories) often leads to a vicious cycle, where that restriction leads into subsequent binging which leads into restriction . . . you get the picture. This can be within a 24 hour period, over a few days, or even over a week. Learn from the situation, practice some grace with yourself (you're a human and you'll mess up! That's okay! Everyone does!), and move forward.

Realistically, tracking your intake should be a tool that's used at varying times during your life. It's wonderful to practice greater self-awareness into your eating habits and notice the interplay between food, mood, and bodily sensation, and normal eating does account for switching between periods of tracking intake and eating more intuitively. If you do so choose to track your intake with weight goals in mind, please remember that the level of strictness you engage with should be the

**EMOTION**



"Eating this cookie will make me fat"



"Eating this asparagus will make me thin"



"I've already been bad, may as well eat the entire tub because my progress has already been ruined"



"240 calories, non-optimal but a tasty treat."



"No, an overall calorie deficit will make me thinner"



"No, I've consumed 150 enjoyable calories, then consumed another 1000 calories, the latter is the part which ruined my defecit."

majority of your life! It is unrealistic and unsustainable that you would be weighing and logging every bite that ever goes into your mouth, and, quite frankly, pretty disordered.

Practicing weight maintenance means keeping an eye on weight trends, but easing up attention on your diet to allow for even more flexibility. Many people choose to stop tracking once weight goals are met, and turn towards an intuitive eating approach, where trust is given to your hunger/fullness cues for making food decisions. Ultimately, tracking and paying more attention to your intake should give you the confidence that you are not going to gain 10 pounds overnight, your body will not be “ruined,” and you can trust your eating when you are on vacation, celebrating holidays, enjoying parties. It takes time and practice to reframe those fears using logic and knowledge.

Binging can also apply to exercise. For many of us, we love exercise - it feels great (at least when you're done!), puts you in a better mood, and relieves stress - but more isn't always better. Overexercising - spending excessive amounts of your day in exercise, not feeling comfortable with missing a workout or taking fewer than X amount of steps per day, not being comfortable eating enough or certain foods without working out, feeling like you have to negate food calories with exercise calories, always chasing sweat or muscle soreness as an indicator you performed your exercise well - is not healthy and puts you at risk for injury. If you are working towards building strength, rest and recovery are CRUCIAL to allowing your body to repair and strengthen your muscle fibers. Food is an integral part of recovery. Your body is constantly using energy and nutrients during the day, regardless of your exercise or not. Just like we practice balance in our food choices, we must also practice balance between our exercise and rest days.



# PRACTICE BALANCE BETWEEN EXERCISE AND REST DAYS

COMPONENTS OF DAILY  
ENERGY EXPENDITURE  
(RMR, TEF, PA, NEAT)

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TDEE

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"RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD,"  
SUCH A LOADED PHRASE!



## COMPONENTS OF DAILY ENERGY EXPENDITURE: RMR, TEF, PA, NEAT

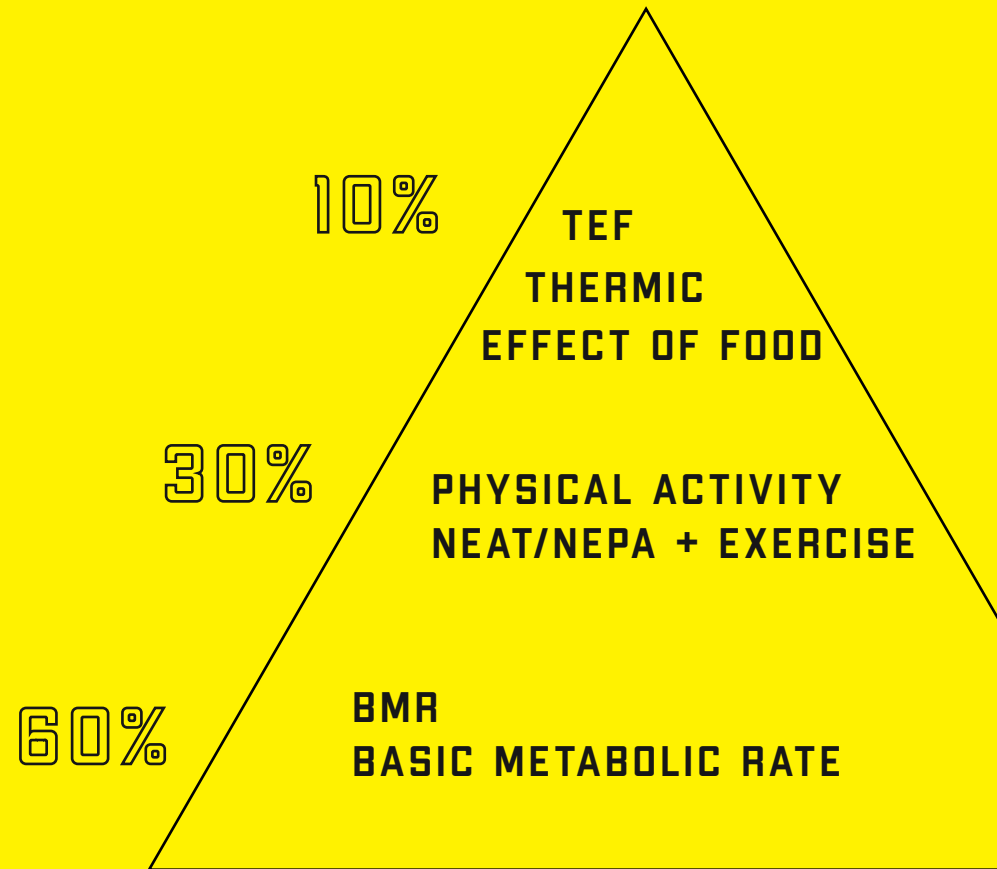
Three common scenarios I see frequently are:

- + worrying about overeating,
- + underestimating the amount of energy needed for active individuals,
- +and misestimating food intake.

The first typically results in anxiety and stress around meal times, and the second often leads to chronic undereating, which negatively affects athletic performance, female hormones, and can trigger seemingly uncontrollable overeating. The third creates the frustrating situation where people perceive themselves “to be doing everything right,” but are not seeing their desired weight change.

Knowledge is power, and it can be so helpful to understand the multiple components of energy expenditure during the day and night. Our bodies are constantly using energy, even while at rest, and this knowledge is useful to debunk some nutrition misconceptions often touted in the fitness community, such as “I can’t eat after a certain hour,” “I need to work out an extra hour for this dinner,” or ideas about “jumpstarting your metabolism.”

Let’s break down the TDEE - or Total Daily Energy Expenditure. This is the total amount of calories you use in a 24 hour period. Remember that a calorie is a unit of energy, used to express how our bodies transform energy from the food we eat. There are SIX biological processes which are always happening in our bodies (same for all living creatures): movement, respiration, growth, reproduction, excretion, and nutrition. Your metabolism is always working, and there are no supplements to take which will increase it.



# TDEE

TOTAL DAILY ENERGY EXPENDITURE

# LET'S BREAK DOWN THE TDEE

Let's break down the TDEE or Total Daily Energy Expenditure. This is the total amount of calories you use in a 24 hour period. Remember that a calorie is a unit of energy, used to express how our bodies transform energy from the food we eat. There are SIX biological processes which are always happening in our bodies (same for all living creatures): movement, respiration, growth, reproduction, excretion, and nutrition. Your metabolism is always working, and there are no supplements to take which will increase it.

Total Daily Energy Expenditure is the sum of the following

**RMR:** Resting Metabolic Rate

**ExEE:** Exercise Energy Expenditure

**NEAT:** Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis

**TEF:** Thermal Effect of Food

**AEE**

10-30%

**AEE:** Activity Energy Expenditure calories burned through activity-physical activity (intentional exercise) unintentional activity (NEAT)

**TEF**

10%

**TEF:** Thermic effect of food calories burned through digestion and storage of food you eat.

**RMR**

60-70%

**RMR:** Resting Metabolic Rate resting metabolic rate: calories burned at rest. determined by body size (height/weight), age, gender, fat free mass, fat mass

## THE RESTING METABOLIC RATE (RMR)

is the bare minimum of calories needed to SURVIVE while lying down in a conscious state. This is the energy that goes towards keeping your heart beating, your lungs working, your brain functioning, your blood circulating, and unsurprisingly makes up the greatest percentage of TDEE at 60-75%. Multiple predictive equations are used to estimate the RMR, and any TDEE calculator will use one or multiple of these equations as the basis for estimating daily caloric needs.

RMR is strongly correlated to lean body mass (aka muscles and your organs), meaning larger people, athletes, and younger people will usually have a higher RMR. Translation- the more muscles you have, the more energy your body uses during the day, even at rest. Organs and muscle demand a lot of energy, and when we can't change how many organs we have, we can increase our muscle mass through progressive muscle overload. We see a decline in RMR of about 2-3% per decade for women and men respectively, however, this is believed to be due to the unfortunate reality that most of us lose lean body mass as we age. Translation- the more muscles you have, the more energy your body uses during the day, even at rest. Organs and muscle demand a lot of energy, and when we can't change how many organs we have, we can increase our muscle mass through progressive muscle overload



**BRAIN**

240KCAL/HG/DAY

**HEART**

440KCAL/HG/DAY

**SKELETAL MUSCLE**

13KCAL/HG/DAY

**KIDNEYS**

440KCAL/HG/DAY

**LIVER**

200KCAL/HG/DAY

**RESIDUAL MASS**

12KCAL/HG/DAY

TDEE

## EXERCISE ENERGY EXPENDITURE (EXEE)

is exactly what it sounds like, the calories burned through deliberate workouts. There is A LOT of variability involved in estimating calories burnt from a workout, including what type of exercise you do, how long you work out for, and the intensity of the exercise. ExEE contributes an extremely variable percentage to the TDEE, ranging from minimal in sedentary individuals to 50% in highly active athletes. Please take information from activity trackers and cardio machines with a grain of salt, as the caloric expenditure tends to be overestimated. Weightlifting almost always burns less calories than expected!



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## NON-EXERCISE ACTIVITY THERMOGENESIS (NEAT)

is all the other movements you do during the day, like walking around at the grocery store, fidgeting, getting antsy during a movie, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, even standing and maintaining your posture. Similarly to ExEE, NEAT is highly variable, but ranges from 5-15% of the TDEE. When we track step goals, that is a good indicator of the level of NEAT during the day. NEAT is an often overlooked component for weight change, and is an easily manipulated variable. High levels of NEAT often can be beneficial for fat loss goals, however, can be detrimental for muscle gain goals if adequate calories are not consumed.





All these components add up to show the many different ways your body uses energy continuously during a 24 hour period. Even if you did absolutely nothing all day, you still need energy! Eating food does not need to be earned with exercise, and your physical activity makes up a minority of your daily energy needs when compared to what your body needs to just stay alive. Sure, your general activity level will guide setting caloric or intake goals, but people will also notice a natural decrease in appetite if activity level is decreased. It's just as okay to eat on a rest day as it is on a workout day.

**"EATING FOOD DOES NOT  
NEED TO BE EARNED  
WITH EXERCISE."**





# 07 RECIPES, PORTIONS

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"RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD,"  
SUCH A LOADED PHRASE!

As we discussed before, there's not a right or wrong way to structure your eating during the day. If you're a person who has never eaten breakfast in your life and doesn't plan to start now, it's totally fine to just eat lunch and dinner. If you're a person who likes to graze during the day, eating multiple small meals might be the way to go for you. Experiment! Remember, there is nothing special about intermittent fasting for weight loss, it is simply another way to create a caloric deficit. Many people, especially if they have lower nutritional needs, like having two large meals instead of spreading out calories more evenly. Again, others find they enjoy eating more frequently during the day and would prefer to have their calories spread out equally during the day. It doesn't matter for weight loss! Focus on consistently hitting your calorie and protein goals in a way that makes sense for you.

Questions to ask when you are thinking about your meals and what food to make, regardless of the size or timing, are the following.

DOES MY MEAL HAVE A . . .

PROTEIN?

PRODUCE?

CARB?

ADDED FAT?

Putting all these components together is important for fullness, satiety, taste, and nutrient density. Protein-rich foods promote satiety, the fiber in produce and carbs promotes fullness, and added fat provides nutrient absorption, satiety, and palatability. Plus, every human cuisine on this planet eats these components together! This balance works if you are eating American, Thai, Ethiopian, Indian, Mexican, French . . .

In a really general sense, portion sizes are generally estimated as below. Please keep in mind, this is GENERAL and might not apply to you based on your intake and goals.

**CARBS**

around 1 cup cooked (rice, pasta, oatmeal, etc.), 1 cup cold cereal, 2 slices of bread, 1 English muffin, 1 bagel, 1 large wrap, 4-6 small corn tortillas

**PROTEIN**

3-6 oz of protein foods, 1 cup of beans or lentils, 2-3 eggs, 1 cup of dairy (milk, yogurt)

**PRODUCE**

1-2 cups of raw or roasted vegetables, 1 piece of fruit, 1-2 cups of cut fruit or berries

**ADDED FAT**

1 tsp - 1 tbsp for cooking fat, 1-2 tbsp salad dressing, ¼ c. guacamole or hummus, 2-4 tbsp of nuts or seeds, 1-2 tbsp nut butter, 1 tsp - 1 tbsp butter, 2 tbsp cream cheese, 1 tbsp mayo

Snacks are a great time to either pair a produce and protein together, like the following combinations, or to incorporate fun foods into your diet. The produce and protein combination is satisfying and filling (thanks protein and fiber!), as well as tasty and easy to eat on the go.

- + Salted nuts and dried fruit
- + Peanut butter on celery sticks (add raisins or sunflower seeds for Ants on a Log!)
- + Hummus and radishes
- + Greek yogurt with berries
- + String cheese and an orange
- + [Protein balls](#) with blackberries
- + Boiled eggs with carrot slices
- + Peanut butter with an apple
- + Edamame with cucumber
- + Beef jerky with a pear
- + Smoked tofu with sliced bell pepper
- + Cottage cheese with peaches
- + [Roasted chickpeas](#) with celery sticks

Take a look at some recipe ideas in the following pages for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Most are around 500-600 kcals, which is usually good for a meal. Again, this might change for you based on your goals, especially if you prefer to have multiple small meals throughout the day. Caloric estimates are just estimates, the exact amount will vary based on brands, actual food weight.

# BREAKFAST

## BREAKFAST SANDWICH

**500 KCAL, 28 G PROTEIN, 8 G FIBER**

- + 1 English muffin (130 calories) spread /c 1 tsp butter (40 kcal)
- + 2 eggs (140 kcal) or 6 oz firm tofu\* (180 kcal) scrambled
- + ¼-½ c. frozen spinach
- + 1 slice cow or plant-based cheese (~80 kcal)
- + Plus 1 piece of fruit or 1 cup berries, cut fruit, etc (~80 kcals)

Scramble your eggs or tofu with spinach, add a slice of cheese, eat your sandwich with a side of fruit.

\*This baked breakfast tofu recipe is my favorite - so easy!

[Breakfast Tofu \(The No Meat Athlete Cookbook\)](#)

## MANGO GINGER CARROT SMOOTHIE

**425 KCAL, 31 G PROTEIN, 9 G FIBER**

- + 1 banana (100 kcal)
  - + 1 cup frozen mango (130 kcal)
  - + 1 medium carrot (25 kcal)
  - + 1 inch fresh ginger root (peeled or unpeeled, doesn't matter)
  - + 1 cup unsweetened soy milk or cow's milk (70 kcal) Soy has more protein than the other plant milks at 7 g per cup!
  - + 1-2 scoops protein powder (~100 kcals for 20 g) Whatever the amount you need to give 20-40 g protein
  - + ¼ tsp turmeric
  - + Dash of cracked black pepper
- works synergistically to promote increased absorption of curcumin, an anti-inflammatory component in turmeric
- + Enough water to blend!

# BREAKFAST

## ZUCCHINI APPLE OVERNIGHT OATS

550 KCAL, 42 G PROTEIN, 17 G FIBER

- + 1 small zucchini, diced (20 kcal)
- + 1 small apple, diced (75 kcal)
- + ½ cup dry rolled oats (150 kcal)
- + 1-2 scoops protein powder (~100 kcals for 20 g)
- + 2 tbsp ground flaxseed (60 kcal)
- + 1 tbsp peanut butter (95 kcal)
- + 1 cup unsweetened soy milk or cow's milk (70 kcal)
- + Water to desired consistency

Mix all ingredients together, add water to give you the consistency that you like. Keep in mind that the flax seeds will absorb water and make the mixture thicker! Leave overnight and enjoy hot or cold the next morning.

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## SMOKED SALMON BAGEL

475 KCALS, 30 G PROTEIN, 8 G FIBER

- + 1 whole wheat bagel (240 kcal)
- + 4 oz smoked salmon (132 kcal)
- + 2 tbsp cream cheese or non-dairy cream cheese (100 kcal)
- + ½ cup sliced cucumber (8 kcal)
- + Ideas for optional sprinkle on top- bagel seasoning, nutritional yeast, cracked pepper and sea salt

Toast your bagel (or not, I don't know you), spread with cream cheese, top with salmon and cucumbers. Ready to eat!



# LUNCH

## "CHICKPEA OF THE SEA" SANDWICH

[SIMPLE VEGANISTA](#)

**460 KCALS, 22 G PROTEIN, 19 G FIBER**

- + 1 serving of chickpea salad (169 kcal)
- + 2 slices Ezekiel bread (160 kcal)
- + Lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle etc for sandwich
- + ¼ c. hummus (110 kcals)
- + 1 cup sliced bell peppers (25 kcal)

Make your sandwich with hummus and bell peppers on the side!

## THE ADULT LUNCHABLE

**510 KCALS, 34 G PROTEIN, 3 G FIBER**

- + 4 oz deli meat (ham, turkey) OR 4 slices vegan deli slices\* (125 kcal)
- + 1 oz cheddar or plant-based cheese (115 kcal)
- + 10 Ritz original crackers\*\* (165 kcal)
- + 1 cup grapes (105 kcal)

Cut your meat and cheese into cute cubes or slices, pair with your crackers, enjoy your fruit!

\*Tofurkey and Whole Foods 365 both make tasty vegan deli slices!

\*\*a surprise vegan product





# LUNCH

## APPLE SUNFLOWER SALAD 500 KCALS, 20 G PROTEIN, 10 G FIBER

(THE TRICK TO A GOOD SALAD IS TO PUT IN LOTS OF TEXTURES & FLAVORS)

- + 2-3 cups romaine lettuce, chopped or ripped into bite-size pieces
- + 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped (140 kcal)
- + 2 tbsp shelled sunflower seeds (95 kcal)
- + 1 medium apple, diced (120 kcal)
- + ½ cup croutons (95 kcal)
- + 1 tbsp salad dressing (balsamic would be good, or poppyseed!) (50 kcal)

## REFINED BEANS TACO 475 KCALS, 20 G PROTEIN, 20 G FIBER

- + 1 cup canned fat-free refried beans (180 kcals)
- + 4 small corn tortillas (210 kcals)
- + 1 cup frozen pepper and onion mix (or fresh is cool too) (25 kcal)
- + 1 tsp olive oil (40 kcal)
- + Cumin or taco mix for seasoning
- + ¼ of a large avocado or ½ of a small one (60 kcal)
- + Salsa

Saute peppers and onion in the olive oil with a small amount of cumin or taco mix seasoning, garlic powder, add salt to your taste. Warm your beans up on the stove, heat the tortillas. Top the tortillas with refried beans, avocado, and salsa, sauteed veg on the side.





# DINNER



## PESTO SHRIMP PASTA

**504 KCALS, 38 G PROTEIN, 5 FIBER**

- + 4 oz frozen precooked shrimp, defrosted (135 kcal)
- + 2 oz dry angel hair pasta to give 1 cup cooked pasta (220 kcal)
- + 1 cup steamed fresh or frozen broccoli (24 kcal)
- + 2 tbsp pesto (125 kcal)

Cook your pasta, mix in shrimp, broccoli, and pesto. Garnish with some fresh parsley, cilantro, red pepper flakes, Parmesan, or nutritional yeast!

## BBQ TEMPEH

**581 KCALS, 30 G PROTEIN, 11 G FIBER**

- + 4 oz baked BBQ tempeh\* (217 kcals, plus 55 kcals for ~2 tbsp BBQ sauce)
- + 1 medium baked potato (160 kcal), topped with 2 tsp cow or plant-based butter (70 kcal)
- + 1 cup roasted brussel sprouts, with 1 tsp of olive oil per 1 cup raw (~78 kcal)

Bake your tempeh, potato, and roast some brussel sprouts! You can do it all using a 375 degree oven, or microwaving a potato is super easy and fast.

\*Tempeh is a traditional fermented soy food from Indonesia. It has a great nutty flavor and tons of protein! You can find it at Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Marianos, and sometimes Jewel, usually in the refrigerated produce section. BBQ tempeh is super easy and tasty! Cut an 8 oz block of tempeh into 8 equal slices, put into a baking dish, and add ½ cup store bought barbecue sauce. Flip the slices so they are completely covered in sauce. Bake at 375 degrees for about 20 minutes.



# DINNER

## EGG ROLL IN A BOWL

417 KCALS, 30 G PROTEIN, 4 G FIBER

### PINCH OF YUM

- + 1 serving of [Egg Roll in A Bowl](#) (~217 kcals)
- + -Could also use ground chicken or turkey
- + Vegan t: use crumbled tofu, [Gardein Beefless Ground](#), [Lightlife Gimme Lean](#)
- + 1 cup cooked white rice (200 kcals)

## SMOKY WHITE BEAN SHAKSHUKA

510 KCALS, 25 G PROTEIN, 10 G FIBER

### BUDGET BYTES

- + 1 serving of [shakshuka](#) (380 kcals)
- + 1 slice of Italian bread (130 kcals)

Serve and eat!

TEXTBOOKS, BOOKS,  
WEBSITES, ONLINE ARTICLES,

# 08 RESOURCES

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READING, LEARNING, AND GROWING OH MY!

## TEXTBOOKS

### [Krause's Food & the Nutrition Care Process](#)

The "nutrition bible" all RDs know and love

### [Sports Nutrition: A Handbook for Professionals](#)

More advanced, in-depth sports nutrition

## BOOKS

### [Intuitive Eating](#)

"Building a healthy relationship with your body and making peace with food"

### [Sports Nutrition Guidebook](#)

A great introduction to general sports nutrition

### [What to Eat](#)

Marion Nestle breaks down marketing lingo and food labels at the supermarket

### [Renaissance Woman](#)

Detailed lifting-specific sports nutrition

## WEBSITES

NIH Dietary Supplement Fact Sheets

<https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/list-all/>

Examine- Independent Analysis on Supplements and Nutrition

<https://examine.com>

Sailrabbit- BMR, TDEE, and BMI Calculator (very in-depth)

<https://www.sailrabbit.com/bmr/>

## ONLINE ARTICLES

[International Society of Sports Nutrition Position Stand: protein and exercise](#)

[Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance](#)

### [Nutritional Nonsense Detection Kit](#)

Practice skepticism and critical thinking towards nutrition claims!

### [The Truth About Your Slow Metabolism](#)

A little crass and certainly male-centric, but good points and good research references



## RESOURCES



<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
About 7 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1 Cup (40g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 1g	<b>1%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 105mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 34g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	<b>11%</b>
Soluble Fiber 2g	
Insoluble Fiber 1g	
Total Sugars 7g	
Incl. 7g Added Sugars	<b>14%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 120mg	10%
Iron 1mg	6%
Potassium 100mg	2%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**Ingredients:** Whole Grain Brown Rice, Cane Sugar, Fructooligosaccharides, Unsulfured Molasses, Sea Salt, Calcium Carbonate, Organic Honey, Tocopherols (antioxidants to maintain freshness), Natural Flavor.

## THE SERVING SIZE

The serving size may not be the same as the portion size! (or the amount of food you'll actually eat) This example is for cereal - it may be more realistic to eat two cups for breakfast but one cup for a snack. If you are eating two cups - that's cool, just remember to double the numbers below. And weighing foods by the gram will always be more accurate than using measuring cups/spoons for tracking.

## FATS

You can see the new nutrition labels have the different types of fats broken out! Manufacturers are permitted to round numbers within certain limits, which is why we see 1g of total fat but 0g listed for all the individual types. So we don't know what kind of fat that 1g is, but it doesn't matter that much - it's a tiny amount!

## SODIUM

Limiting sodium for healthy active individuals without hypertension is actually not recommended - sodium is a crucial electrolyte we lose through water losses (e.g. sweat). If you eat super salty food, you will most likely see scale weight increase - but don't panic, it's just water weight.

## TOTAL CARBOHYDRATES

Total Carbohydrates are ALL carbohydrates in the serving size - again, broken down into individual categories. You're usually looking for higher Dietary Fiber and lower Added Sugars - unless, like, it's candy. Total Sugar minus Added Sugar indicates the naturally occurring sugar in that food, like fructose in fruit or lactose in milk.

## PROTEIN

Here protein is coming from the brown rice - there are small amounts of protein in most grains. All protein adds up during the day! If you are looking to use a food as your main protein source in a meal, it should provide ~20-30g protein per portion size

## MICRONUTRIENT

The micronutrient portion - less than 5% of the DV is considered "low", greater than 20% is considered "high." This cereal is an ok source of calcium and iron, low in potassium and vitamin D (why did they even put this?)

## INGREDIENTS

Ingredients are listed in order of highest content to lowest content, e.g this cereal has more brown rice than cane sugar. We can see that there are FOUR types of added sweeteners in this hippie cereal - cane sugar, fructooligosaccharides, molasses, and honey.



**WORK ON YOU  
FOR YOU**

# THANK YOU

Thank you for reading the Ladies who Lift nutrition guide.

We hope that you come to think of this guide as a resource you can come back to again and again when the world of diets and fads and internet fitness stars tells you that lemon water will help you burn fat (also not true). Let this be your anchor to real information and real solutions when put to work correctly.

We want every Ladies who Lift lady to have a healthy relationship with food, training, and their body, and hope that this guide has been helping in taking that a step further. As always-Ladies who Lift is here for you if you have any other questions, comments or concerns.

**SO PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO US AT  
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